

Message Text

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FM AMCONSUL ZANZIBAR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1375

INFO AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ZANZIBAR 0067

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, TZ

SUBJECT: PRISONERS PARDONED BY JUMBE

REF: A. DAR ES SALAAM 1841 B. ZANZIBAR 50

1. IN A SURPRISE MOVE COMMEMORATING INTERNATIONAL WORKERS MAY DAY, LANZANIA VICE PRESIDENT/ZANZIBAR PRESIDENT ABOUBAR PARDONED CERTAIN ZANZIBAR PRISONERS AND REDUCED THE SENTENCES OF OTHERS. AMONG THOSE PARDONED AND RELEASED, OR WHOSE SENTENCES WERE REDUCED, WERE 22 INVOLVED IN THE TREASON TRIAL. OF THESE PERSONS CHARGED WITH PARTICIPATING IN THE APRIL 1972 ATTEMPT TO OVERTHROW ZANZIBAR'S GOVERNMENT, WHICH RESULTED IN THE THE ASSASSINATION OF ZANZIBAR'S THEN-PRESIDENT ABEID AMANI KARUME, 8 WHO HAD BEEN SENTENCED TO THE REFORMATORY FOR PERIODS OF BETWEEN 12 TO 15 YEARS WERE PARDONED AND SET FREE; 14 OTHERS WHO HAD BEEN SENTENCED TO LIFE IMPRISONMENT OR TO A PRISON TERM BETWEEN 30 TO 35 YEARS , HAD THEIR SENTENCES REDUCED TO TEN YEARS.

2. APART FROM THOSE WHO HAD BEEN INVOLVED IN THE TREASON TRIAL, JUMBE ALSO PARDONED AND RELEASED A TOTAL OF 146 PRISONERS WHO HAD

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BEEN CONVICTED ON DIFFERENT CHARGES.

3. JUMBE WAS NOT PHYSICALLY PRESENT ON THE ISLAND WHEN HIS DECISION WAS ANNOUNCED; HE WAS IN DAR ES SALAAM ATTENDING MAY DAY CELEBRATIONS THERE. ZANZIBARIS HEARD THE ANNOUNCEMENT ON THE RADIO, JUST AS THEY HAD BEEN INFORMED OF NYERERE'S APRIL 26 AMNESTY FOR THE 13 TREASON TRIAL PRISONERS WHO HAD BEEN HELD ON THE MAINLAND AND

TRIED IN ABSENTIA ON ZANZIBAR (REFTEL A).

4. COMMENT: JUMBE'S ACTION FOLLOWS CLOSELY ON THE HEELS OF PRESIDENT NYERERE'S APRIL 26 AMNESTY , AS WELL AS HIS OWN ACTION IN COMMUTING THE DEATH SENTENCES OF THREE TREASON TRIAL PRISONERS (REFTEL B). LITTLE IS KNOWN ABOUT THE REASONS BEHIND JUMBE'S DECISION TO RELEASE SOME PRISONERS AND REDUCE THE SENTENCES OF OTHERS,

BUT IT CAN ASSUMED THAT NYERERE'S INFLUENCE WAS A MAJOR FACTOR. JUMBE'S ACTION WILL TEND TO ENHANCE HIS REPUTATION AS A RESPONSIBLE LEADER AND IMPROVE ZANZIBAR'S IMAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE. IT TACITLY ACKNOWLEDGES THE CURRENT EMPHASIS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF HUMAN RIGHTS.

5. ZANZIBARIS IN GENERAL SEEM TO BE REACTING TO BOTH NYERERE'S AND JUMBE'S DECISIONS IN A SUBDUED MANNER. ALTHOUGH THE MORE PROMINENT OF THE PRISONERS RELEASED ON THE MAINLAND (E.G., ABDULRAHMAN MOHAMED BABU, FORMER MEMBER OF ZANZIBAR'S REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL AND ONCE TANZANIA'S MINISTER FOR ECONOMIC AFFAIRS AND DEVELOPMENT PLANNING, WHO IS CONSIDERED TO HAVE BEEN THE LEADER OF THE 1972 PLOT; AND ALI M. MAHFUDH, A FORMER ARMY OFFICER) ARE NOT EXPECTED TO RETURN TO ZANZIBAR, MOST OF THOSE RELEASED WILL PROBABLY PICK UP THEIR LIVES AGAIN ON THE ISLAND. THE RELATIVES OF THE RELEASED PRISONERS ARE, ON THE WHOLE, HAPPY AND BECAUSE THERE IS A GREAT DEAL OF INTER-RELATIONSHIP AMONG ZANZIBARIS, BOTH BY BLOOD AND BY MARRIAGE, THE PRISONERS HAVE MANY RELATIVES
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- BOTH IN AND OUT OF GOVERNMENT. THERE HAS BEEN SOME GRUMBLING AT THE RELEASE OF THE 146 "COMMON CRIMINALS" WHO HAVE BEEN CHARACTERIZED BY SOME PEOPLE AS "THIEVES, DRUNKARDS AND MURDERERS", BUT

SUCH DISCONTENT IS MINIMAL AND NOT SUFFICIENT TO CAUSE JUMBE WORRY.

6. NYERERE PRESUMABLE TOLD JUMBE BEFORE THE FACT THAT HE (NYERERE) WAS GOING TO RELEASE THE 13 TREASON TRIAL PRISONERS ON THE MAINLAND, BUT JUMBE EVIDENTLY DID NOT DISCUSS THIS WITH THE MEMBERS OF ZANZIBAR'S REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL. JUMBE'S OWN DECISION WITH RESPECT TO THE PRISONERS ON ZANZIBAR, HOWEVER, WAS PROBABLY NOT A UNILATERAL ONE. JUMBE WOULD HAVE HAD TO OBTAIN, IF NOT COMPLETE SUPPORT AND AGREEMENT FOR THIS DECISION,, AT LEAST MAJORITY APPROVAL FOR IT - OR AGREEMENT NOT TO OPPOSE IT-FROM THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL MEMBERS. HIS TASK WAS MADE EASIER BY THE FACT THAT SEVERAL OF THE OLDER, MORE CONSERVATIVE MEMBERS OF THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL ARE PRESENTLY ILL AND THE FACT THAT OTHER MEMBERS ARE COMPLETELY OCCUPIED WITH THE CHOLERA SITUATION ON THE ISLAND.THERE WILL,HOWEVER, BE A RESIDUE OF DISSATISFACTION WITH JUMBE'S DECISION. AND NYERERE'S AMNESTY, WHICH MUST HAVE SEEMED RATHER A SLAP IN THE FACE TO ZANZIBARIS AS THEY CELEBRATED THE UNION OF ZANZIBAR WITH

THE MAINLAND, HAS LIKELY CAUSED A SIMMERING RESENTMENT AT NYERERE'S HIGH HANDED TREATMENT OF ZANZIBAR AND RECONFIRMED THE SUSPICIONS OF ZANZIBARIS WHO FEEL THE MAINLAND HAS NO RESPECT FOR ZANZIBAR'S SOVEREIGNTY AND IS ONLY INTERESTED IN GETTING ZANZIBAR'S FOREIGN RESERVES. THE SECURITY FORCES IN PARTICULAR, ARE REPORTEDLY UPSET WITH THE FREEING OF THE PRISONERS, WHICH THEY SEE AS A MOVE UNDERMINING THEIR AUTHORITY. AS WITH OTHER DECISIONS TAKEN IN THE LAST YEAR AND A HALF (E.G., THE REMOVAL OF ZANZIBAR'S HIGHLY NATIONALISTIC ATTORNEY GENERAL, THE (PAPER) MERGER OF ZANZIBAR'S FOREIGN RESERVES WITH THOSE OF THE MAINLAND, THE MERGER OF THE ZANZIBAR AND MAINLAND POLITICAL PARTIES INTO A SINGLE ONE FOR TANZANIA), JUMBE WILL WEATHER THE GRUMBLING; HIS STATUS AS PRESIDENT'S NYERERE'S SUCCESSOR WILL BE STRENGTHENED AND
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THE ZANZIBAR-MAINLAND UNION WILL BE INCREMENTALLY STRENGTHENED, WITH A CONCOMITANT EROSION OF ZANZIBAR'S AUTONOMY.
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